

Women's Rights Newscast

Class Procedure: The class will be graded together on the flow of the newscast and the organization between groups along with the final segment the group creates. Each class will choose an anchor and a co-anchor who will set the order of the presentation and handle the lead ins to the subtopics, writes and reads off the lead story. In addition, an Executive Producer and editor will work with this group.

Preparation: Read your section interactively noting some statistics and ideas you'd like to include in the newscast. Consider these questions for your topic:

What were the chief frustrations of the women's movement on your topic?

What were the most prominent successes of the women's movement in your topic area?

What obstacles and failures did feminists experience in fighting for change?

In what significant ways did the reforms change American society?

Did the women achieve full equity in your area?

What remains to be done to earn equality?

Bring some costumes and props to class that you might use for your story.

Day of: Write the script of your story, find appropriate attire and for your presentation, rehearse it, film it (2-4 minutes) and edit it. Yes, in literally one period so get to work.

— — —

Key Concerns of the Women's Movement Feminists of color greatly expanded the scope and power of the women's movement. They demanded that the movement focus not only on sexism, but also on racism and poverty, which greatly affected many women of color. Feminists of color both criticized the white, middle-class focus of the women's movement and helped push for equal rights for all women.

Similar Viewpoints Women of color in the women's movement strongly supported and participated in the fight for equal pay, legalized abortion, and government-supported childcare centers. According to one 1972 poll, 67 percent of African-American women supported women's liberation, compared to 35 percent of white women. Other women of color also supported the movement, despite some objections and concerns. One Laotian- American woman asserted, "There are barriers between women of color and white women, but we have so much similarity." A Filipino-American woman stated, "I am a strong feminist....[I] focus on women's issues, issues around oppressed people, and poverty issues."

"The cult of true womanhood": Despite black women's hardships throughout slavery, they were excluded from the "cult of true womanhood" which could only be offered to white women. Victorian social guidelines of submissiveness and purity could not be granted to black women because of the social construction that black women had sexual "temptations..which came from the days of their race enslavement" By keeping this oppressive stereotype, black women were perceived as sexualized, and lacked credibility to their own issues. Black women deconstructed this myth and formed the Black Women's Club Movement to pay special attention to issues not only of women, but of the black community as well. In Fannie Barrier Williams speech, she critiqued white women who feared Black rapists, yet "Black women were

suffering at the hands of White ones.” Predominantly white women’s clubs did not see the issue of black women’s victimization an action worthy of protection which portrayed that black women’s issues did not matter in the white women’s movement. Yet, the Black Women’s Club Movement continued to persist in the effort that not only black women’s lives mattered, but black men’s lives mattered as well by taking on issues such as anti-lynching, education, poverty, employment, and defeating sexism among white and black communities. Because of their exclusion from white women and their decision to defend their name and “moral integrity as women,” black women further advocated for their lives. The Black Women’s Club made the case for why African American lives mattered in the nineteenth century, not only for black women, but for black men as well.

Differing Perceptions of Work Despite their commonalities with the mainstream women’s movement, many feminists of color felt the movement did not address key issues that concerned them. For example, the mainstream women’s movement was primarily composed of middle-class white women, many of whom had not worked outside their homes. They wanted to change family structure and society’s expectations so they could more easily find fulfilling opportunities in the workforce. In contrast, the majority of women of color—well over 50 percent—had always worked outside the home, in addition to raising children and doing housework.

One Latina woman remembers, “[Work] wasn’t just a man’s thing, it was a side-by-side thing.... [We] had to work to survive.” In addition, in 1970 nearly 40 percent of African-American families lived in poverty while only about 10 percent of white families did. Thus, rather than focusing on their entry into the paid workforce, women of color in the movement focused on increased pay, more opportunities for higher-level jobs, and overcoming racial discrimination within their workplaces. For example, the author of a history of the Mexican-American Women’s National Association (MANA), noted that some male Latinos “tried to tell us you couldn’t be both a Chicana and a feminist. Nevertheless, when analyzing any feminist issue, MANA always asked two questions, ‘How does this affect our women?’ and ‘How does this affect our people?’” In another example, Sharon Sayles Belton states in *In the Company of Women*:

People, quite frankly, want you to choose. Are you black or are you a woman? I mean, how can I choose one over the other? Because I work on feminist issues, or on issues that are important to women, doesn’t mean that I’m not concerned about the discrimination I experience because of my race. I have to do both. It’s not either/or. I think women of color have gotten some gains, too [through the women’s movement]. But we have special needs that other women need to understand, and they need to join us in that fight, our fight. I’m not going to get equality with white women unless white women understand racial discrimination and decide to band with me on that.

Racism Within the Women’s Movement Many feminists of color also believed that white feminists were unwilling to face their own racism. One African-American feminist noted, “In too many instances it seemed that white women wanted careers and high paying jobs so that they could hire black women to take care of their children without paying them a decent wage.”

Many women of color were reluctant to join predominately white women's groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) because they felt their concerns were not seriously considered. One Native-American activist noted, "The leadership of the national women's organizations has got to change color. They can't play the game of getting a few [women] who have the skin color required, but whose philosophy is so close to that of the leadership that it's indistinguishable."

Changes in Recognition of Race and Ethnicity Black women experienced inequality in several venues being marginalized in feminist politics as a consequence of their race, and in antiracist politics as a consequence of their gender. Feminists of color led the women's movement in addressing a wider range of issues, such as the ways poverty and racism affected women in the paid workforce. They worked for more inclusive consideration of women's rights, challenging the mainstream women's movement to join struggles such as those for better working conditions in mines and factories. Feminist of color also successfully pressed white feminists to look beyond their points of view and confront their own prejudices. They slowly achieved leadership positions in mainstream feminist organizations. Furthermore, women of color formed their own activist organizations, such as the National Black Feminist Organization, the Organization of Chinese-American Women, and the Mexican-American Women's National Association to fight both sexism and racism.

Sexual Violence and Race: Women of color experience instances of sexual harassment and assault far more than caucasian women. The process of grouping all women into one category of experiencing sexual violence fails to acknowledge the unique ways in which racism and sexism systematically affect different groups of women of color. Hyper-sexualized depictions of women of color, particularly Black women, have functioned since the early 1400s and have manifested themselves through our political and cultural landscape for centuries. The myth that Black women were vessels for sexual desire was used to justify enslavement, rape, forced reproduction, and other forms of sexual coercion in the early onset of Western colonization. sexual violence perpetrated against Black women is often ignored or dismissed due to untrue biases regarding their sexuality. However this myth and other very real issues have influenced the number of Black women who report sexual assault. For every 15 Black women who are raped, only one reports her assault, yet over eighteen percent of African American women still reports an assault in her lifetime. African American women are 2.5 times more likely to experience physical or sexual violence from a partner or spouse. However, they are just as likely to lack access to mental health and physical services.

Another study done by Amnesty International, concluded that Native American women were targeted even more often on the basis of specifically their race and gender. Across the country they are murdered and sexually assaulted on reservations and nearby towns at far higher rates than other American women. Their assailants are often white and other non-Native American men outside the jurisdiction of tribal law enforcement. More than half of Native American women have been sexually assaulted, including over a third who have been raped during their lifetime — a rate of rape nearly 2.5 times higher than for white women, according to a 2016 National Institute of Justice study.

Today: Minority women still get less compensation than their caucasian counterparts and face far higher discrimination, harassment, and sexual assault. Women of color believe that the women's movement is more complex than just pushing for gender rights with the intersection of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, religious background.